

**THE KATHERINE WATSON'S AMBITION  
TO EMPOWER FEMALE STUDENTS IN MIKE NEWELL'S  
*MONA LISA SMILE* (2003):  
A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE**



**RESEARCH PAPER**

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **A. Background of the Study**

In the reality life people have many various problems. The problems can include many aspects of life such as social, economic, religion, culture, and even politic. One of the problems is caused by ambition. There are many ambitions of life such as: freedom, rich, power, etc.

Generally, the term “ambition” is a desire for success, achievement, and power or wealth. The term “ambition” can be defined as a motivation in oneself to improve a situation, while ambitions person is a person who has great or inordinate desire of power, honor, office, superiority, or distinction.

As one of human’s characteristics, ambition can be separated from the existence of human himself in this world. According to Kartkilpatrick (1962:39), one’s ambition will exist if he has a strong desire to succeed, if he is diligent in the pursuing of his goals, and if he is willing to pay the price for whatever success that he desires to achieve. In the meantime, Deborah Jenkins (2001:34) states that ambition includes one’s visions and plans. Here, there are two aspects of ambition. They are ambition for the position and personal ambition. The ambition for the position covers the opportunity to get the higher position, the opportunity to state the opinion or speak in the public space. While personal ambition involves the increase of salary and the comfortable and better condition of life.

Everybody needs ambition to reach her aim. Everything in her life can be taken by an author as the backgrounds or the reason to write idea about the problem of life itself. One of the life problem that becomes the source of the literary works is the position of woman in a society since there are still many treatments toward women.

American women from the end of World War II through the 1960s also reflected the underlying social upheaval. They come slowly to realize that sex discrimination could be subtle as well as overt-even as they played the roles of wife and mother that society demanded. Most women are content for a time to make the most of these old fashioned roles. Women lived under the rules set by Confucius in his analects.

Confucius doctrine said women were not equal to men, because women were unworthy or incapable of a literary education. Confucius taught that women's role were to look after the men in their families. He believed that it was not acceptable for a woman to have her own ambitions and that she should have barely any life outside her own home.

In the early traditions supported the separation of male and females within school. Such separations were largely predicated on fears about sexuality but also encompassed beliefs about the need for different types of education for females, who were to spend most of their lives in the private sphere, and for males, who were to spend their lives in the public sphere (Mandel, 1995).

The usual phenomenon in ancient America in 1953 is traditional structure. In 1953, America tradition states belief that schooling of girls in that time was

persistently influenced by the dominant ideologies regarding the role of women in wider society. The dominant ideal upheld by the middle classes for women was that of the good wife and mother, so girls were “offered a curriculum that would make them attractive in marriage market” (Purvis, 1991, p. 30).

A real example of movie that carries out the ambition of women to make different about tradition states that repressed female figure phenomenon is a film by Mike Newell entitled *Mona Lisa Smile*. *Mona Lisa Smile* movie was released in 19 December 2003 and produced by Revolution studios and Colombia pictures. The running time of *Mona Lisa Smile* movie is around 117 minutes and the budget of this movie is \$65,000,000. *Mona Lisa Smile* movie was directed by Mike Newell, written by Lawrence Konner and Mark Rosenthal, and starring by Julia Roberts, Kirsten Dunst, Maggie Gyllenhaal, and Julia Stiles. The genre of this movie is drama romance and the film is a loose adaptation of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, a novel by Muriel Spark.

Mike Newell was born on March 28, 1942 in St. Albans, Hertfordshire, United Kingdom. He is director, producer and executive. He graduated from University of Cambridge, England. His wife's name Bernice and his children name Lizzie and Billy. His works includes; *The Awakening* (1980), *Bad Blood* (1983), *Dance with a Stranger* (1985), *The Good Father* (1986), *Amazing Grace and Chunk* (1987), *Enchanted April* (1992), *Into the West* (1993), *Four Weddings and a funeral* (1994), *An Awfully Big Adventure* (1995), *Pushing Tin* (1999), *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of fire* (2005),

*England's Labor Party*, and directed numerous TV plays for Granada TV in England, etc.

*Mona Lisa Smile* movie received five Golden Globe nomination; first, Broadcast Film critics Association award for Critics Choice Award Best Song in 2004 for the song "The Heart of Every Girls". The second, Golden globes, USA for Golden Globe Best Original Song in 2004 for song "The Heart of Every Girls". The third Phoenix Film Critics Society Awards in 2004 for PFCS Award Best Use of Previously Published or Recorded Music. The fourth, Satellite awards in 2004 for Golden Satellite Award Best Original song. And the fifth, Teen Choice Awards in 2004 for Teen Choice Movie Actress-Drama/Action Adventure.

*Mona Lisa Smile* movie tells about an Art History teacher that is Katherine Ann Watson and four smart students in Wellesley College campus. The *Mona Lisa Smile* movie is an inspiration film that explores life through feminism, marriage and education lead by modern teacher at the end of traditional era. Her name is Katherine Ann Watson, a liberal minded novice professor from California, who lands a job in the art history department at a snobbish all girl college, called Wellesley.

In the fall of 1953, it is the first time when she teaches in Wellesley institution. She is surprised because all of the students read the syllabus and have ability in that materiel. She changes their lesson to modern art to make them think for themselves, and explore outside of their traditional view. In art history class, she meets four smarter students they are; Betty, Giselle, Joan, and Connie.

Giselle, Joan, and Connie admire Katherine and look her as a mentor. One day, Joan meets Katherine in her office. She asks question to Katherine” Why I got score C?”Katherine answers that she must read a lot of books. In her office, Katherine reads Joan’s file, and she reads that Joan has potential to be lawyer. Katherine encourages Joan to apply to Yale Law School. She knows how much Joan wants to be accepted to Yale and Katherine feels that Joan has the better chance of them all. However, Joan is very much in love with Tommy, who had just been accepted to Harvard University. She wants very much to pursue her education and dreams of becoming a lawyer, and she follows through with the application to Yale.

Betty in the other hand has married with Spencer. In the party, Connie begins to like the person whom she sees and although he shows signs of liking her as well, Betty quickly sabotages the relationship by lying Connie, and telling her that he does not love her, and has another girlfriend. In the end Connie decides not to meet the boy again and ends the relationship with him. At that time Professor Dunbar who was sleeping with the student, begins falling in love with Katherine. In Betty’s house, Betty expects Joan marriage with Tommy but Joan chooses school in Yale school. Betty is surprised to know that Katherine has encouraged Joan to follow her dreams and apply to Yale.

In the different place, Paul comes from California to surprising Katherine by visit during Christmas. Paul feels lonely without Katherine in California, and he decides that it is time for him to propose her but Katherine does not accept his proposal. Katherine is also in the process of falling with Professor Dunbar,

despite the fact that he was sleeping with the students. However, Katherine quickly learns that Professor Dunbar has been lying to her about his past, and she terminates their short-term affair.

Betty again writes a damaging editorial, charging Katherine with being a subversive influence. Katherine feels hurt, and appalls by Betty's editorial which put her job on the line, and quickly put her lesson plan aside to sway a class opinion against Betty's action. In another day, Connie find out that Betty has lied to her for a long time. Knows about it, she decides to find Charlie Steward and returns an intimate relationship with Charlie.

After being married, Betty is happy at first, as they bought a fancy little house off campus, and Spencer had just bought her a new washer and dryer. However, with his new job, he never has time to stay at home with her. He travels frequently, supposedly on business, until Betty finely learns that he has another woman. Giselle had also seen him out with this other woman, while she was out on the town with an older man. Betty turns the anger and frustration out Katherine, and the rest of her friends, until she decides that she wants to pursue a divorce. However, her mother, along with society does not approve of divorce. Betty tries to stay with her mother, as she is thinking things through, but her mother insists that she goes home, wait for her husband, and pretends nothing was going on. She warns her not to let other people know her dirty laundry, but Betty has a change of heart, and a new outlook on her life. Betty rebels against her mother's wishes, and divorces her husband. She then decides live together with her friend Giselle in boardinghouse.

President Carr asks Katherine to teach again in Wellesley College. President Carr knows that all of the students loved Katherine and Katherine to be an inspiration for the students, especially for Betty. Katherine rejects President Carr's invitation; she decides to follow her heart, and returns to California. All of her students are heartbroken, and follow her car off the driveway, holding on to the hope that women do have a choice. Betty rides a bike, down beside of the taxi, placing her hand against the window, as if to say she is holding on to Katherine's inspiration and would never forget her.

There are four reasons why the writer is interested in studying this movie; first is because this movie is an interesting movie. The second reason is *Mona Lisa smile* movie is considered as one of the best American Films. The third reason is *Mona Lisa Smile* movie reflects the strength of a woman teacher. And the last reason is *Mona Lisa Smile* movie took a simple plot.

First is because this movie is an interesting movie. It can be looked from the genre; the genre of this movie is drama romance. Every character in this movie has love experience, like: Katherine with Professor Dunbar and Paul, Joan with Tommy, Betty with Spencer, Connie with the man that she loves, and Giselle loves to Professor Dunbar, but Professor Dunbar does not love her.

The second reason is *Mona Lisa smile* movie is considered as one of the best American Films. *Mona Lisa Smile* movie won many Awards, such as: Broadcast Film critics Association award for Critics Choice Award Best Song in 2004 for the song "The Heart of Every Girls". The second, Golden globes, USA for Golden Globe Best Original Song in 2004 for song "The Heart of Every



Girls”. The third Phoenix Film Critics Society Awards in 2004 for PFCS Award Best Use of Previously Published or Recorded Music. The fourth, Satellite awards in 2004 for Golden Satellite Award Best Original song. And the fifth, Teen Choice Awards in 2004 for Teen Choice Movie Actress-Drama/Action Adventure.

The third reason is *Mona Lisa Smile* movie reflects the strength of a woman teacher that wants to change the traditional society viewed in United States in 1953 and the movie must be seen for anyone who has been in a teaching setting. Because the movie gives a good example of how teachers deal with many types of students.

And the last reason is *Mona Lisa Smile* movie took a simple plot which the story has relation each other make cause effect relation from beginning until the end of the story, so it makes easy to the writer in understanding the movie.

The writer uses Liberal Feminist theory as an approach to analyze this movie, because this movie has great possibility to know the phenomenon of feminist of the main character and *Mona Lisa Smile* movie reflects the strength of woman to struggle for her life. It can be found in the main character of Katherine Watson. Katherine, although a new teacher, she has ambition to empower her female students to change her traditional views of women’s role. She shows that women not only have domestic role but also public role.

From the illustration above, the writer gives the title **“THE KATHERINE WATSON’S AMBITION TO EMPOWER FEMALE STUDENTS IN**

## **MIKE NEWELL'S *MONA LISA SMILE* (2003): A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE"**

### **B. Previous Studies**

*Mona Lisa Smile* is an American film that is very popular. As long as the writer knows, there has been other researcher who conducted a research on the movie. In his study, Yoga Sudarisman (2006) discussed "*An Abstraction of Application Psychoanalysis on Mona Lisa Smile Movie*" using Psychoanalytic Approach. He focuses on the character Katherine Watson and Betty experienced Oedipal Complex. In the case, the important thing which analyzed is the characters text or their script as a text manifest for recovering the hidden meaning of that text. He concludes that both of them are good character if the viewer see on narration term even verbal term that showed as beautiful woman, brilliant and they seem to be no problem.

Another research is done by students of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, namely: Against Traditional Colleges in Make Newell's *Mona Lisa Smile*: a Sociological Perspective by Sari Ika Puspita. She concludes that, based on the structural analysis, the movie shows that the director was successful in integrating all structural elements of the movie into a good unity, representing his criticism against the traditional college. Based on the Sociological analysis, the movie shows that the director reflected some social realities of American Society. Among other social realities clearly reflected in the movie are the cultural aspects of the society, particularly the way of live, values, and norm.

But as far as the writer knows there is no study on Katherine Watson's Ambition to Empower Female Students in Make Newell's *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003) at least in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta that uses A Feminist Perspective.

### **C. Limitation of the Study**

The writer will focus on analyzing the ambition of Katherine Watson to empower female students as major characters on *Mona Lisa smile* movie directed by Mike Newell, viewed from feminist Perspective.

### **D. Problem Statement**

The problem statement of the research is "How is the ambition of Katherine Watson to empower female students reflected on the characters in *Mona Lisa smile* movie directed by Mike Newell in feminist Perspective?"

### **E. Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To analyze the movie based on its structural elements.
2. To analyze the movie based on the feminist perspective.

### **F. Benefit of the Study**

The benefits expected from the study are as follows:

#### **1. Theoretical Benefit**

This study is expected to contribute to the large body of knowledge, especially on Mike Newell's *Mona Lisa smile* by using Feminist Perspective.

## **2. Practical Benefit**

This study is expected to contribute to enrich the researcher's own understanding about the movie and the application of the theory in the analysis.

## **G. Research Method**

### **1. Type of the Study**

In this research, the writer analyses the ambition of Katherine to empower female students in *Mona Lisa Smile* movie by using qualitative method. In writing the research paper, the writer employs the qualitative research. Qualitative research involves the studied use a collection of a variety of empirical materials case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview, artifact; cultural texts and production; observational, historical, interrelation, and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moment and meanings in individuals live (Denzin, 2000: 25). Then, the steps of conduction this Qualitative research are (1) determining the object of the study (2) determining the type of the data and data source (3) determining the method of collecting data, and (4) determining the technique for analyzing data.

## 2. Object of the Study

The object of the study is *Mona Lisa smile* movie directed by Mike Newell.

## 3. Type of the Data and the Data source

In this research, there are two sources of data namely primary and secondary data source.

### a. Primary Data

The primary data source in this research is a movie entitled “*Mona Lisa Smile*” which was released in 2003 and directed by Mike Newell. This movie was produced by Revolution Studios and Colombia Pictures. The data are taken from the script, character’s description, plot and all of the statement related to the problem.

### b. Secondary Data source

The writer takes the secondary data sources, including from other literatures, discussion about structural elements, women’s psychology, Feminist perspective and other related source.

## 4. Technique of the Data Collection

The technique of collecting data is purpose sampling. The writer took sample of dialogue and ellipse of picture of the movie then used it as a starting point to analyze the issue. The analysis of the sample and dialogue and ellipse of picture could be used as a representation of a general phenomenon in social life. In order to make the data more complete, the researcher is doing some steps. The necessary steps are as follows:

- a. Watching movie and finding out the important sentences on the dialogues
- b. Reading the script of the movie
- c. Reading the books that connect to the research
- d. Browsing to the internet to get some information articles that relate to the research
- e. Finding out the important data
- f. Arranging the important data based on it research
- g. Developing the data that are provided with the research

## **5. Technique of the Data Analysis**

The data are analyzed by using descriptive analysis. It concerns with structural element of the movie and feminist analysis. The steps are:

- a. Classifying the data
- b. Verifying the data
- c. Interpreting the data based on underlying theories

## **H. Research Paper Organization**

Research Paper Organization is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is introduction which consists of background of the study, previous studies, limitation of the study, problem statement, objective of the study, benefit of the study, research method and paper organization. The second chapter is underlying theory, which consists of notion of feminism, basic concepts of feminist and theoretical application. The third chapter consists of social historical background of America society in the late twentieth and early

twenty first centuries. The fourth chapter consists of structural analysis containing the structural elements of the movie. The fifth chapter consists of feminist analysis that consists of women's position, women's right, women's role, women's participation, and discussion. And the last chapter is conclusion and suggestion.